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SUBJECT: GOVERNORS OF GEORGIA, KANSAS, AND MISSISSIPPI MEET
WITH PRESIDENT KARZAI

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: IN A MEETING WITH THE GOVERNORS OF GEORGIA, KANSAS AND MISSISSIPPI AND GENERAL BLUM, KARZAI WAS IN A GENIAL MOOD, HIGHLIGHTING PROGRESS ON COUNTER NARCOTICS, BUT PRESSING FOR CONTINUED INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT TO ENSURE SUCCESS. HE PRAISED THE AFGHAN PEOPLE'S COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY AS EVIDENCED BY THE PEACEFUL ELECTIONS, WHILE MUSING ON THE EVILS OF TOO MUCH CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE NEED TO IMPROVE HIS OWN GOVERNANCE. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) ON NOVEMBER 26, GEORGIA GOVERNOR BARBOUR OF GEORGIA, KANSAS GOVERNOR SIBELIUS, MISSISSIPPI GOVERNOR PERDUE AND GENERAL BLUM CALLED ON PRESIDENT KARZAI. INITIALLY, KARZAI DISCUSSED HIS TRAVELS AROUND THE UNITED STATES AND HIS IMPRESSIONS OF VARIOUS REGIONS. GOVERNOR SIBELIUS EXPLAINED THAT THE PURPOSE OF THEIR MISSION WAS TO VISIT THEIR STATES' TROOPS, STATIONED IN QATAR, KUWAIT, IRAQ, AND BAGRAM, NOTING THAT ALL THE SOLDIERS THEY SPOKE WITH HAD BEEN VERY POSITIVE ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE UTILITY OF THEIR PRESENCE.

13. (SBU) IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT HOW AFGHANISTAN HAD PROGRESSED SINCE THE FALL OF THE TALIBAN, KARZAI COMPARED THE AFGHANISTAN OF FOUR YEARS AGO TO A "SAD, BLACK AND WHITE MOVIE," WHICH HAS NOW MOVED INTO "COLOR AND HOPEFULNESS." HE DESCRIBED THE POSITIVE ATTITUDES AND IMPROVED HEALTH OF GROUPS OF TEACHERS HE HAD SPOKEN WITH RECENTLY, COMPARED WITH THOSE HE MET WITH IN 2001. THEY HAVE MUCH BETTER ATTITUDES AND GENERALLY BETTER HEALTH. OTHER SIGNS OF NORMALIZATION ARE THE PRESENCE OF FIVE TELEVISION CHANNELS (ONE PUBLIC, FOUR PRIVATE) FEATURING PROGRAMS SUCH AS MUSICAL CONTESTS. HE THANKED THE GOVERNORS FOR U.S. SUPPORT, EMPHASIZING THAT NONE OF THESE ACHIEVEMENTS WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT IT. "WE HAVE A GOOD ARMY AND POLICE FORCE, A WELL-FUNCTIONING BUREAUCRACY, BUT WE STILL HAVE TO FIGHT TERRORISM ALONG OUR BORDERS," HE CONCLUDED.

14. (SBU) KARZAI CITED A NEW USG-LED SURVEY SHOWED A 48 PERCENT REDUCTION IN LAND UNDER POPPY CULTIVATION, COMPARING IT TO AN EARLIER UN REPORT WHICH HAD SAID LAND UNDER CULTIVATION HAD BEEN REDUCED BY 21 PERCENT. (COMMENT; INL CONSIDERS THIS PARTICULAR SURVEY TO HAVE STARTED WITH A VERY HIGH BASE FIGURE THE PREVIOUS YEAR. THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF HECTARES UNDER CULTIVATION CITED IN BOTH SURVEYS DID NOT VARY GREATLY. END COMMENT) HE SAID THE PROVINCE OF GHAZNI HAD EARNED MORE FROM POTATOES THAN FROM OPIUM THIS YEAR AND THAT IN 2005 50,000 FAMILIES HAD REFRAINED FROM PLANTING POPPY. THE PRESIDENT MADE A PLEA FOR SUSTAINED INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE, WITHOUT WHICH THE CN EFFORT WOULD NOT BE SUCCESSFUL. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM GOVERNOR PERDUE ABOUT THE ADEQUACY OF WATER, KARZAI DISCUSSED THE EFFECTS OF THE SEVEN-YEAR DROUGHT AND DESTRUCTION OF THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM, AND MENTIONED THAT HE WOULD RAISE THE SUBJECT OF DAMS AT THE LONDON CONFERENCE.

15. (SBU) KARZAI REFERRED WITH PRIDE TO THE SUCCESSFUL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, NOTING THAT, IN SPITE OF ALL THE LOSERS (5,800 CANDIDATES FOR ONLY 600-PLUS SEATS) WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN TEMPTED TO CREATE PROBLEMS, THERE WAS LITTLE DISRUPTION. TWENTY-EIGHT PERCENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARIANS WERE WOMEN, SOME ELECTED ON THEIR MERITS "THE AFGHAN PEOPLE ARE OUR STRONGEST PARTNER; WHETHER THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT WILL BE IS A GOOD QUESTION," HE MUSED, NOTING THAT HE WAS NOT A FAN OF BIG GOVERNMENT, WHICH HE CONSIDERED TO BE THE PROBLEM, NOT THE SOLUTION. "ALL YOU NEED IS A FOREIGN MINISTER AND A FINANCE MINISTER," HE JOKED.
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